

**"To learn anything fast and effectively, you have to see it, hear it and feel it."
-Tony Stockwell**

Spring 2008

Out of the Box and Into a New Framework: Learning Differences

Introduction

By Meryl Becker-Prezocki, KYAE Senior Associate for Curriculum and Instruction



Dear Colleagues:

In the past few months, I have traveled widely across the state. It has been wonderful to meet and talk with you. It is always good to listen to your stories about students. I have especially enjoyed the opportunity to recommend teaching strategies and learn if the techniques have been beneficial. I am constantly reminded of everyone's tremendous efforts to help our students successfully meet their educational goals, improve their quality of life and enhance the community in which they live.

In our conversations, I hear examples of how you support, encourage, instruct, teach, reteach, prop, brace, share and reinforce the adult student. Sometimes the road is quite smooth; however, most of the time it has some rough spots, uneven patches, bumps and pot holes along the way. You are the key figures in making a difference for our students.

In this issue, we are continuing with the theme "Out of the Box" and featuring stories about how to meet those specific and diverse needs of our students. The articles will feature information on assistive technology, PowerPath screenings for learning difficulties, testing accommodations, teaching challenges and student success stories. I hope that you will find something of value. Enjoy reading!

How Do I Teach This Student?

By Anne Greenwell, Instructor, Jefferson County Public Schools

Yolanda bolted through the door, late as usual. She stumbled over another student getting to her seat and interrupted my teaching by asking for a pencil and paper. I confess I was not elated to see her. Yolanda's attention was a fickle thing; it would leave her in an instant...without warning.

After she made it to her seat, I thought, "Good, I can continue teaching." Not exactly. After a brief respite, Yolanda was up sharpening her pencil and getting a drink. When she accomplished this, she lighted in her chair, but started tapping her foot against the leg of the table and using her pencil as a drum stick to tap out the beat of a song playing in her head. Again, I stopped teaching to engage her in the lesson and try to rescue her classmates from further distractions. What could I do to accommodate Yolanda's distress so both she and the others could succeed in an effective learning environment?

After class was over, I pulled out materials I collected on students with attention difficulties and found strategies to help Yolanda learn. I used the following approaches to sustain her atten-

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PD Partners

- Kentucky Adult Education (KYAE)
- Adult Education Academy for Professional Development
- Collaborative Center for Literacy Development (CCLD)
- Kentucky Institute for Family Literacy

How Do I Teach This Student?(cont.)

tion and limit the disruptive activity.

- I allowed directed movement in class that was not bothersome.
- I gave Yolanda a seat at the end of the row and allowed her to stand throughout the class.
- I gave her pipe cleaners and rubber “stress balls” to replace the tapping pencil. These allowed Yolanda to fidget without disturbing the other students.
- I met with Yolanda and gave her a list of behaviors that were not appropriate for class. This conference gave me insight into Yolanda’s self-awareness. She did not realize that some of her actions were aggravating the class. When working with a partner, for example, Yolanda would begin personal conversations and could not sense that her classmate felt this to be an intrusion.
- I started using active responses. I asked Yolanda to work at the board after teaching a concept. Knowing that she would be asked to demonstrate to the class helped her have a purpose for paying attention. The bonus was that the other students saw that class was a safe place to make mistakes and try again. Soon Yolanda was sharing board time with fellow students.
- I used activity as a reward. I asked Yolanda to hand out work packets to students who came in late and keep a list of the math strategies that I taught each day. If I ran out of lesson packets, I asked her to make copies. I even made Yolanda timekeeper, so she could remind me to end class on time.
- I break students into small groups routinely to help them articulate the strategies they are learning and give them opportunities to practice their problem solving/critical thinking skills. I paired Yolanda with classmates who could model not only academic skills but appropriate social skills.

“Most days these strategies mitigated Yolanda’s impulsive behavior. However, twice she would or could not cooperate.”

“Yolanda was successful in mastering the skills needed to advance from my class to the next level.”

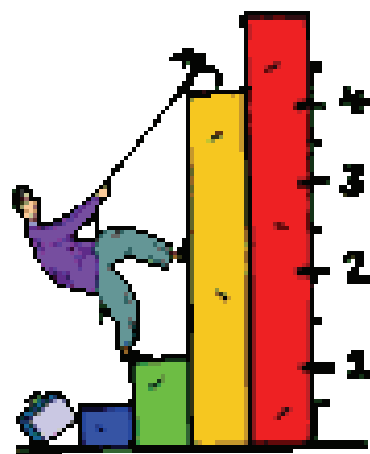
- I complimented Yolanda on her successes after class. Acknowledging positive behavior seemed to encourage more of the same.
- If I sensed that Yolanda was having difficulty focusing and maintaining attention, I allowed her to work on the computer. She could choose from a short menu of sites an activity that mirrored the skill I was teaching.

Most days these strategies mitigated Yolanda’s impulsive behavior. However, twice she would or could not cooperate. On these occasions, the natural consequence was for her to leave for the day. I was sure to tell Yolanda to come in the next day before class, and we would review how we could work collaboratively to reach her goals. Then I counted to ten and tried to remember that we both were doing our best on that day.

Yolanda was successful in mastering the skills needed to advance from my class to the next level. She made the transition to the more difficult class and seemed to be adapting to her new teacher and classmates. Her GED level teacher and I collaborated on what strategies to use to enable Yolanda to continue to progress. In November, however, she started missing days and then weeks. We tried to contact her without success.

I am hopeful that Yolanda will return to build on what she accomplished and that she will feel the staff and students welcome her return. When she does return, she might notice that I am integrating additional strategies that research shows are appropriate for the whole spectrum of learning styles, especially those who struggle with learning differences.

- Find out what your students already know. Learning needs to be built on the foundation of what individuals already know. It does not take much time to ask and list a group’s prior knowledge of a topic or skill.



How Do I Teach This Student? (cont.)

- Use graphic organizers. I was not an early adopter of graphic organizers. Now I incorporate them into most lessons and find them to be invaluable.
- Allow students to audiotape class instruction.
- Give an overview before teaching and a summary afterwards.

Implementing these strategies has not been a burden, but it does take additional time to find interesting, real-world material. This time, however, is well spent if relevant topics can better engage and thus affect the learning and success of students.

If the research is accurate, we have a big challenge. Some findings report that many, if not most, adult students have some learning difference. These differences may not be as apparent as Yolanda's because adults become experts at hiding their learning barriers. But the research also details some encouraging results. There are strategies that teachers can implement to support all types of students and lead them to academic success. Using this information, we **can** learn to effectively teach students of all abilities.

References:

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Levine, M. (2002). *A Mind at a Time*, New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.

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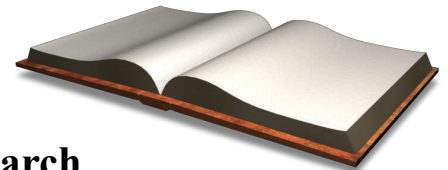
Meryl Recommends....

Help Yourself: How to Take Advantage of Your Learning Styles

by Gail Murphy Sonbuchner

Reading by the Colors

By Helen Irlen



Other books on Learning Styles and Brain-Based Research

About Learning: by Bernice McCarthy

The Learning Revolution: by Gordon Dryden and Dr. Jeanette Vos

Brain Gym: by Paul and Gail Dennison

Learn More on Learning Styles

<http://www.shambles.net/pages/staff/Lstyles/>

http://adulthood.about.com/od/adultlearning/Understanding_Adult_Learning_Adult_Learning_Theory_Learning_Styles.htm

Unconditional Belief

Carleen Ficker, Instructor, Grant County

"Self-esteem has to be firmly grounded in achievement: our self-image is probably the most important thing in determining whether we are good learners." *Colin Rose*

For the adult education student this philosophy says it all. I guess I am passionate about this because it is personal. I saw first hand how emotion ties into learning.

Daniel's story: When my son was three months old he suffered a hearing loss, this coupled with other chronic illnesses affected the way Daniel would learn and already at four years old I could see this was affecting Daniel's self-image as well as the way others were viewing him. By the time Daniel went to pre-school I knew I would have to develop a program that worked for him. I started Daniel on the Brain Based Research I was investigating. The journey would end up helping so many others. By the time Daniel was in 4th grade he was reading on a 12th grade reading level in all areas.

"I feel the most important strategy we as instructors need is to have unconditional belief in our students."

When I taught Title 1 and Family Literacy, I saw how emotions tied into learning. I had a waiting list of parents before and after school who wanted parent education to help their children. I then knew I was needed so desperately in helping the parents know what to do for their children.

Because my whole life I have been involved in reading and helping people with learning differences, I knew what to do and what plan of action to take to help Daniel; but now I also knew I needed to help other parents who alone – without "Family Reading" could not help themselves. So, with this in mind, I set out on, as Amelia Cloud calls, my Pied Piper Journey.

Emotion is the gateway to learning. The emotional center of your brain is closely connected with your long-term memory storage. Eighty percent of LEARNING DIFFICULTIES are RELATED to STRESS. (Dryden, Gordon & Vos, Jeannette) Yes, that is right, a whopping 80% just because of stress.

With this knowledge, I knew that the first two strategies of the 7 Simple Strategies I was researching and creating for Daniel had to be about lessening stress while increasing and maintaining focus.

1 - Play classical music everyday as background noise. The 60 to 70 beats per minute of classical music puts one into the alpha state for relaxed learning. The type of composers you are looking for are Bach, Andante and Largo. My favorite CD in which you can find all of these composers is called "Relax with the Classics". The Lind Institute of Music states that playing this music activates the brain to receive new information and helps move information into long-term memory. According to Schmid and Charles, this mood setting music is one of the major keys to achieving rates of learning five times faster than before. Now wherever I go, or wherever I am teaching from, you can bet classical music will be playing in the background as background noise.

2 - Deals with green plants and lighting. In recent research just in from NASA Space Administration, Dr. Loretta Lanphier, in an article summarizing this work, brings forward the work of Dr. B. C. Wolverton at Stennis Space Center in Mississippi, where he conducted a two-year study on common house plants. With EPA citing that now 6 out of 10 buildings can have sick building syndrome, the best way Wolverton suggests to cleanse the air is by converting chemical air pollutants into harmless substance by strategically placing common house plants throughout a room. You can accomplish this feat by using these specific plants: peace lilies, parlor palms, Chinese evergreen and chrysanthemum are all good at "sucking pollutants" from the air. The ivy is the littlest house plant of all of these but the most mighty. These plants cleanse the air by adding more oxygen for brain power, while also reducing emotional stress. In addition, the color green of the plant is said to have a healing effect on the body. The shape of a plant's leaves also provides another element of service, in the battle of lessening stress while helping one to increase and maintain focus. You are definitely getting more bang for your buck by placing any of these common household plants throughout your classroom.

The lighting of your environment also plays an important factor in stress and learning. Studies suggest that natural lighting is the best at reducing stress and fatigue. The next best choice is full spectrum lighting followed then by CFL. Full spectrum can help reduce eye fatigue, lessen the stress hormone levels, while improving your mood.

While these strategies in and of themselves are so important, and can definitely decrease stress, while increasing and helping one to maintain focus, I feel the most important strategy we as instructors need is to have **unconditional belief** in our students. Belief in students that they will succeed, coupled with the right strategies woven into a structured systematic approach means the students' possible achievements are endless.

Case and point in this note a student just wrote:

"It was great fate that day we crossed paths the way we did in the Head Start office that day in early March. I overheard you talking to the Head Start staff about tutoring adults to return to education while interweaving strategies for Family Reading. I was immediately drawn to the conversation to learn more about your workshop. I feel my mind was opened up to a new world of learning in college now. I am in my fourth college course, and I am on track to finish the education I started 30 years ago. I have been able to conquer small tasks such as studying for major tests, writing papers for the class and oral presentations because of the confidence I gained in your workshop. I was even chosen as the featured student at NKU Grant County. Your workshop was so encouraging to all the adults involved from all different backgrounds and levels of education. Thank you so much for giving me the confidence I needed to open my mind to a world of continued learning." Kathy F.

Again, just another example of what unconditional belief coupled with the right strategies can do!!!!!!!!!!!!

Managing the Multi-level Classroom

By Jenny Forseth, Coordinator, JCPCS Adult and Continuing Education

Ask any K-12 classroom teacher if they teach a multi-level class and expect the answer to be a resounding "yes". And while it is true that most classrooms are filled with students of varying ability, the adult basic education classroom is in a class of its own. Students enter ABE classrooms in a steady dribble throughout the year. Each day brings a few new students to the class - some cannot read, some are working on high school level. Most need help in math - anywhere from two-digit addition to algebra. And they are all there for different reasons, some are court ordered, some are there to earn a GED and still others want to improve their skills to enter college or for a job. Can one teacher reach all of the students in this type of classroom? Seems impossible, doesn't it?

"When a feeling of community exists, impacts can be seen in students' desire to learn, assessment results and sustainability."

Last year I was lucky enough to serve as a resource teacher to adult basic education teachers in Jefferson County. In that role, I observed and provided support to more than 30 adult basic education classrooms. From my experiences in those classrooms, I have concluded that it is impossible for one teacher to effectively reach all students by himself. One teacher alone cannot do it. Yet, "why do we see impressive academic gains in many of these 'lone soldier' classrooms?" you may ask. As you stand in front of your whiteboard, the answer will appear right in front of you. Keep looking now, do you see the answer? That's right - your students. The successful teachers I've observed change roles from "teacher" to "manager" and work hard to facilitate a symbiotic relationship of learning amongst their students. These teachers toggle students between homogeneous groupings (small groups working on the same skill) and heterogeneous groupings (multi-level groups of students working in a tutoring situation), depending on need. Nowhere did I see this done more successfully than in an adult basic education class *managed* by Gail Price. Here, she shares her thoughts on this topic with us....

I believe in a community of learners. I have witnessed the positive impacts that being a part of a classroom community has on adult learners. I try to create that community from the time a student first comes into my classroom—the community of learners begins with the two of us. That's a start and that's good, but it is not always enough to ensure a commitment to attendance for the "long haul."

When students are part of a group, they identify with others who are taking the same steps they are. Sometimes their stairway is long and difficult. They need to be able to celebrate their successes and voice their discouragement. What better place for that to happen than in group whose members have experienced the same successes and discouragements?

Making students feel welcome and a part of the group from the start is important. Introduce class members by name to the new student. Because they know personally how hard it is to make that first step into a classroom, students who have been attending class are especially welcoming to a new student. I have had students who have acted as tutors—sometimes it is this care and the new voice of explanation that makes a difference in learning. Students have offered words of encouragement when another is struggling and words of congratulation when a skill is mastered. Students feel free to laugh at themselves, encouraging others to laugh with them. They are willing to admit when they do not understand something.

I have watched self-confidence soar and motivation increase when students feel comfortable in the classroom. When the feeling of community exists, impacts can be seen in students' desire to learn, assessment results, and importantly, in sustainability.



For more information and research findings about managing multi-level classrooms, visit NSCALL at <http://www.ncsall.net/?id=168> for an interesting issue of *Focus on Basics* devoted to multi-level adult classrooms.

Meeting the Challenges of Adult Students

by Peter Shaw, Instructor, JPCPS Adult and Continuing Education

Students in adult education classes may have learning or physical difficulties that present challenges to them and their instructors. This has definitely been the case with the Educational Enrichment Services (EES) program in Jefferson County. The EES program is a component of Jefferson County Adult Education that operates in conjunction with Jefferson Community and Technical College. It is a transitions program that focuses on adult students who are attempting to enter postsecondary education but are unable to succeed on the COMPASS entrance exam required for admission to the college.

The EES program serves a variety of students: those who have recently graduated from high school; many who are returning to school after a prolonged absence; and English as a second language students whose goal is to pursue a college degree. In the EES program, we have found the use of the Washington 13, a standardized questionnaire regarding learning experiences, helps us identify students who may benefit from some simple interventions, such as using colored overlays, highlighters and magnifiers to enhance learning.

The Washington 13 is a Yes/No questionnaire that can be given to a large class without fear of embarrassment. There are only 13 questions and the questionnaire can be completed in a few minutes. The responses are scored privately by the instructor, and the scores determine whether the student might benefit from an individual conversation with the instructor concerning the results. As a rule, students are very receptive to discussing their results.

This one-on-one conversation can provide a number of insights that allow us to determine if the student's needs are real and pressing. If so, we may refer the student to the Access-Ability Resource Center on campus where the need for accommodations may be documented. In addition, the instructor may invite the student to participate in a more comprehensive assessment using the PowerPath screening kit.

PowerPath has materials to assess sensitivity to light, attention difficulties, visual and auditory responses and reading skills. The screenings are relatively easy to give, moving through a variety of exercises that prevent the experience from being static and boring. A student's responses are entered into a computer program that delivers a number of strategies to promote a more successful learning experience. The instructor may also present the student with forms for recording their choices and measuring their progress.

We at EES are still in the process of learning to use PowerPath more effectively, but already we have noticed a number of benefits. Using this tool makes us more aware of the challenges that our students face. Learning difficulties are far more pervasive than we previously thought and often have never been effectively addressed. The bond between instructor and student becomes more lasting when both are aware that education is a partnership and that learning difficulties are challenges and not necessarily barriers. It is our hope that students who work with us are better equipped to advocate for themselves in the classroom, the workplace and the world at large. That is our measure of success.

The Washington 13 was developed by Nancie Payne. Access at: <http://www.seekingwdc.org/ld/learningneedstool.pdf>

“We Learn...

10% of what we READ

20% of what we HEAR

30% of what we SEE

50% of what we SEE and HEAR

70% of what we DISCUSS

80% of what we EXPERIENCE

95% of what we TEACH OTHERS”

William Glasser

Recent research suggests that nearly 15% of the general population has learning disabilities.

Fifty to eighty percent of participants in literacy programs have learning disabilities.

——- National Institute for Literacy

Universal Design

By Connie Spencer-Ackerman, Director, Adult Education Academy for Professional Development

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is an approach to curriculum design that customizes curriculum to serve all students, regardless of ability, disability, age, gender, or cultural and linguistic background. UDL provides a blueprint for designing strategies, materials, assessments, and tools to reach students with diverse needs and help them learn. It provides multiple means of representation, expression and engagement.

How can Teachers Incorporate ULD into Teaching and Learning?

Teachers may wish to try the following strategies, based on *Teaching Every Student in the Digital Age: Universal Design for Learning*, by David H. Rose and Anne Meyer (2002).

Use multiple strategies to present content. Using a variety of instructional techniques can motivate and engage students.

Teachers can enhance instruction through use of case studies, music, role play, cooperative learning, hands-on activities, field trips, guest speakers, Internet-based communications and educational software.

Use a variety of materials. To present, illustrate and reinforce new content, teachers can use materials such as online resources, video clips, podcasts, PowerPoint presentations, audiotapes, DVDs and e-books. Students also benefit from using manipulatives. For example, when students weigh and measure real objects, they are more able to grasp the concept of weights and measurement than when they are exposed to the concept only through books and discussion.

Provide cognitive supports. Teachers can give students organizing clues by saying, for example, *I have explained the four main points, and now I'm going to summarize them.* They can introduce new concepts by providing background (contextual) information and make background information engaging by using pictures, artifacts, videos or other materials and methods that are not lecture-based. Teachers can *scaffold* students' learning (provide temporary support to reduce the complexity of a task) by providing a course syllabus, outlines, class notes, summaries, study guides and copies of PowerPoint slides. Students benefit when teachers provide written and audiotaped lists of resources to help students locate background information at their level.

Provide opportunities for practice. Practice and experimentation help students solidify their learning. It is essential for teachers to plan frequent, regular, defined time for students to explore and practice new concepts in a non-judgmental, safe learning environment.

Teach to a variety of learning styles. Building movement into learning, such as total physical response (TPR) exercises for ESL learners, is a powerful teaching strategy. Giving instructions both orally and in writing will engage students both auditorily and visually. Teachers may wish to consider using large visual aids and choosing bold fonts on uncluttered backgrounds for transparencies, slides, graphs and charts.

Offer a choice of learning contexts. Effective instruction provides opportunities for individual, pair and group work. Teachers also can consider distance learning, peer learning and fieldwork.

Provide flexible opportunities for assessment. Students can demonstrate their learning by performing a checklist of steps, writing an action plan, stating what they have learned, drawing mind maps or charts, and expressing their learning through visual or performing arts.

Other suggestions by Michael Tate include:

1) making a **class syllabus** available prior to the start of the class, so slow readers and those who know they will have other claims on their reading time during the quarter can start early,

2) build **strategy instruction** into lessons so that teachers teach how to use a reading strategy so students can practice it on the coming essay assignment, and

3) build your class around **graphic organizers**, so that students can understand how the classes connect to their goals, and how today's lesson connects to the class goals.

4) **Feedback** is crucial for students with learning disabilities, but again is beneficial to all students. Have teachers build activities and classes that have frequent feedback points, so students can gauge how well they are mastering a learning point. Ideally, the feedback would be multimodal as the instruction has been.

In summary, universal design for learning is the approach taken by effective ABE teachers, whether they know its name or not; and it is appropriate for all students, whether they have special needs for not.

For more information on Universal Design, including a list of resources and references, see the CALPRO fact sheet at <http://www.calpro-online.org/documents/FactSheetUniversalDesign.pdf>

The Role of the Educator in Requesting GED Testing Accommodations—the Tenacious Advocate

By Rae Smith, KYAE Associate, GED Services

Testing accommodations are available on the GED tests for those with documented disabilities. Accommodation in testing does not ensure that a candidate will pass—the accommodation is to “level the playing field” so the candidate can demonstrate their knowledge.

To receive accommodations in testing, candidates must submit a request form with documentation from a licensed diagnostician and receive prior approval from the state GED office. Although the process may seem complicated, over 70 requests for testing accommodations were granted in Kentucky during 2007. By becoming familiar with the request process and the documentation requirements, adult educators should be able to routinely assist students with disabilities in submitting and obtaining the appropriate testing accommodations.

Adult Educator's Role

- Identify candidates with disabilities.
- Employ instructional strategies to help candidates with disabilities prepare for the GED.
- Advise candidates about the testing accommodations available on the GED and assist the candidate through the request process.
- Provide supporting documentation for the request for accommodation. Such supporting documentation may include instructional strategies used with the candidate, candidate history and Official Practice Test results with/without accommodations.
- Act as the advocate for candidates.

The adult educator plays an important role in this process. During the instructional process educators can help identify candidates that may have a physical disability, mental/emotional disability, learning disability or other disability that interferes with the candidate's ability to be successful on the GED. Please note that low IQ is not considered a disability for GED testing purposes.

For some adults this may be the first time they are aware they have a disability that can be addressed with instructional strategies and testing accommodations. Other students may have been previously identified in school as having a disability. Often these students are reluctant to identify the problem or ask for accommodations. Since the educator develops a relationship with the student, the student may become willing to identify the disability and seek appropriate accommodations with the educator's support and assistance. An Individual Education Plan from a school district does not assure a student of testing accommodations, but can be used as supporting documentation.

Adult educators often act as the advocate for the student in the request process. The advocate helps the student complete the forms and gather the required documentation. In order to do this, the educator must be familiar with the accommodations available on the GED, the request process and the documentation required.

More than 27% of children with Learning Disabilities drop out of high school, compared to 11% of the general student population.

24th Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2002

Keys to Reducing Test Anxiety:

<http://www.ets.org/Media/Tests/PRAXIS/pdf/01361anxiety.pdf>

<http://education-portal.com/articles/How-to-Relieve-GED-Test-Anxiety.html>

The Role of the Educator in Requesting GED Testing Accommodations (cont.)

Accommodations Available

Here are the testing accommodations available on the GED tests that require prior approval from the state GED administrator:



In addition to these testing accommodations, there are testing “adaptations” that can be granted without prior approval. Testing adaptations, such as the use of a large print test, magnifier or overlays, do not require prior approval. Any candidate wanting to use an “adaptation” must notify the examiner prior to the test session so the appropriate adaptation can be provided.

Educators should try the accommodations and adaptations during the instructional period to see what best addresses the needs of the student. Practice is needed for any student using the audiocassette version of the GED tests. Both the TABE manual and the Official Practice Test manual have guidelines for administering the test with accommodations. The Official Practice Test is available on audiocassette and can be used to teach the student how to use the tapes and tone-indexed recorders. Kentucky Adult Education (KYAE) has the tone-indexed recorders and Official Practice Test on audiocassette and will lend these to any center that has a one time or occasional need for these items.

For more information on using overlays for instruction and testing please contact Rae Smith at rae.smith@ky.gov.

“ADHD is estimated to affect 8.1% of adults, or approximately 9.2 million adults across the United States.”

—Russell Barkley, Ph.D

www.ADD.org

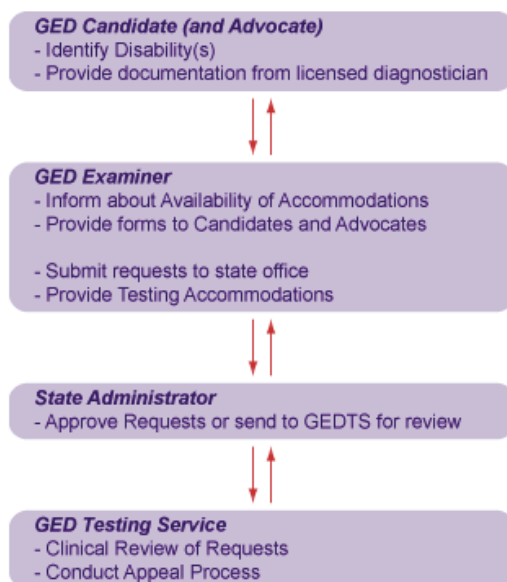
The Role of the Educator in Requesting GED Testing Accommodations (cont.)

Request Process

The request process begins and ends with the chief examiner at the local GED test center. The local examiner has been trained in the request process and knows how to provide the approved accommodations. The request forms should be obtained from the local examiner and the completed forms should be returned to the local examiner.

Requesting and receiving testing accommodations involves the candidate, the examiner, the state GED administrator, and GED Testing Service™ in Washington, D.C.

Here is an overview of the request process:



Some candidates and educators voice concern about the length of time required to have a request approved. If the required documentation is submitted, it may only take two weeks for the request to be approved by KYAE. If the documentation is incomplete it will take additional time to return the request and request the missing documentation. If documentation is submitted, but KYAE is unable to approve the request because a high level of knowledge is required, it will be sent for a clinical review by licensed diagnosticians working for GED Testing Service (GEDTS). Some requests are automatically sent to GEDTS for review including any request where the documentation indicates low IQ, low functioning or mild mental retardation. The GEDTS review is good for the student, because the request will receive a thorough evaluation. However, this process does take time, sometimes a month or more. If the candidate has not received a response to a request in a month, the candidate or the advocate may contact the local examiner or KYAE for an update.

Advocate's Role

The advocate may have to help the candidate obtain the appropriate documentation for the request. For most requests (physical, ADHD, emotional/mental health) the documentation requirement must come from the appropriate licensed diagnostician on official letterhead stating the disability, any medication being used and indicating the resulting functional limitations. The letter should also provide specific recommendations for accommodations and the accompanying rationale. The advocate may have to provide information to the licensed diagnostician about what is required in the letter and the kinds of accommodations available on the GED tests or actually show the diagnostician the form.

For candidates requesting accommodations because of learning or other cognitive disabilities, academic and IQ testing is needed. This information can be included in an attached psychological report or recorded directly on the request form. The advocate can take the information from the report and record it on the form as long as the complete report is attached.

The educator can also provide supporting documentation for the accommodation request. In addition to the required documentation, the advocate can submit a letter with information about accommodations that have worked during instruction. The educator can also provide scores from the Official Practice Test (OPT) administered without accommodations and the scores obtained when accommodations are provided. While the process of documenting the disability should begin as soon as a disability is suspected, the actual request should not be submitted to the GED Administrator until the student has passed the OPT with accommodations.

Finally, the educator and advocate should become familiar with the resources available to assist with this process. The Kentucky Adult Educator's GED Handbook provides a detailed section on testing accommodations. The document is available on the Kentucky Adult Education Web site at www.kyae.ky.gov. Also, get to know the resources in your community. The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation can often provide referral to the appropriate professional for those also seeking employment.

Role of the Advocate

The advocate is an adult (often an adult educator) who helps the GED candidate when he/she:

- Physically cannot complete the form(s)
- Is not sure how to complete the form
- Is unable to get the diagnosing professional to put the information on the form
- Has difficulty following the multi-step process

If the student has a copy of the report from a licensed diagnostician, an advocate can transcribe all the information requested onto the appropriate request form (from the originally signed report), **attach a copy of the report to the accommodation request, and** complete the advocate information as requested in section 3 of the request forms.

The Tenacious Advocate

When an educator takes on the challenge of becoming a tenacious advocate for students with disabilities, the number of requests granted for a center increases. It may take a few requests to become familiar with the process and the documentation, but it becomes easier the more often it is done. Secondly, the local professionals become more familiar with the documentation requirements and are better able to provide the appropriate tests or letters.

Tenacious advocates have seen candidates, once unable to achieve, go on to make important educational gains.

Accommodations Were a Key to GED Graduate Success

By Kathy Ebelhar, Instructor, Owensboro Community and Technical College– Skill Train

Before she was ordered by the court in 2003 to begin studying for her GED, Laura Stoudt had little success with learning.

First held back in kindergarten, Laura spent her elementary and middle school years in special education classes. For the first half of her freshman year of high school, the tide turned – briefly. “I was a regular student in regular classes, like any other student,” she says. Then, however, she was failing all of her classes except for gym.

“After half a year, I returned to special ed,” Laura says. “I wasn’t like the ‘cool’ kids now. I got made fun of a lot after that. I just dreaded the school bus ride home, so finally one day, I just didn’t go back to school.”

At the age of 35, Laura (now in recovery) was mandated by drug court order to begin studying for the GED. She landed at the SkillTrain center at Owensboro Community and Technical College, which she attended five days a week for almost five years.

“At times I got so frustrated and angry inside, I would even cry,” Laura says. “I would ask my teacher (Kathy Ebelhar), ‘Why is it so hard to learn?’ My teacher always said, with her kind, encouraging words, ‘If you don’t get frustrated, you aren’t learning.’ Time and time again, I heard those words, but she is so right.”

“I started taking my work in stride and learned,” Laura says. “I *am* teachable!”

Instructor Kathy Ebelhar did more than provide words of encouragement to Laura. Kathy believed that Laura could succeed at passing the GED if provided testing accommodations, so she encouraged Laura to participate in a battery of learning and psychological assessments.

“It seemed like endless hours of testing, but it paid off well,” Laura says. “I was going to do this! I was able to get all the accommodations, including: time-and-a-half, scribe, private room, 30-minute testing time, 10-minute breaks and audio.”

Laura passed all of the Official Practice Test using accommodations. She took the GED in December 2007, over a period of four days. She passed all sections of the exam but math; she had an average of 540 on the four successful tests.

Laura received additional help and homework on her math; when she retook the math test, she passed.

“I did it!” Laura says. “A 40-year-old woman passed her GED test. Without the accommodations, I could not have done it. If I can do it, anyone can!”

“At times...I got so frustrated...I would cry...I (eventually) learned, I am teachable!”

Special Needs in Family Literacy

By Kathy Stovall, Senior Project Manager, National Center for Family Literacy

Parents of children with special needs or learning disabilities play just as an important role in their child's educational success as a parent whose child does not have special needs. In family literacy programs, it isn't unusual to have a family in which both the parents and child are challenged with learning disabilities; therefore, expanding the need for empowerment and personal success. However, this does not diminish the role that a parent should or needs to play in supporting their child's educational goals and academic achievement.

Dr. Constance Messina writes in the [online article](#), *Tools for Parents of Children with Disabilities and Special Needs*:

"A learning disability is a lifelong issue. With the right support and intervention, however, children with learning disabilities can succeed in school and go on to successful, often distinguished careers later in life. Parents can help children with learning disabilities achieve such success by :

- encouraging their strengths
- knowing their weaknesses
- understanding the educational system
- working with professionals and
- learning about strategies for dealing with specific difficulties."

Central to a parent helping their child to achieve is the parent's role as an advocate for their child. A parent's primary advocacy role is to ensure that their child has a "free appropriate public education" regardless of the nature or severity of the child's disability. For this to happen it is also essential that parents and schools build good relationships focused on the success of the child. Family literacy programs can provide these opportunities when Parent Time and adult education lessons are designed so that parents can learn skills and strategies for advocacy in their role as their child's first and most important teacher.

How to Enhance Parent Advocacy Through Parent Time and Adult Education Instruction

What parents should know and do to advocate for their child.	What family literacy coordinators can do.
Parents should have a copy of the Special Education Rights for Parents and Children (Procedural Safeguards Notice). Parents should be able to identify at least three key points from these rights. Special Education Rights for Parents and Children Procedural Safeguards Notice http://www.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/idea/modelform-safeguards.doc	Plan Parent Time sessions that teach parents how to read and understand the Special Education Rights for Parents and Children. Parents can learn their rights in the form of a jeopardy game, matching game or daily review.
Parents should know how to highlight key information in documents (regarding their child) that they do not understand.	Design adult education lesson plans that teach adults how to identify main points and key information. In Parent Time, create a lesson using the Individual Education Program and Individualized Family Service Plan. Ask parents to identify key information in the documents by highlighting. <i>Be sure to load the document with the types of information parents need to know.</i>
Parents should know how to manage their child's documents.	In adult education, design lessons that teach reasoning and sorting of materials. Include activities that build skills for alphabetizing, indexing and filing. In Parent Time, teach parents to manage their child's school and medical documents by providing them with storage products that they can use to organize and safely store documents.
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What parents should know and do to advocate for their child.	What family literacy coordinators can do.
<p>Parents should always attend meetings regarding their child's education.</p> <p>Parents should attend advocacy/support group meetings.</p> <p>Prior to attending a meeting, parents should know how to find an advocate or parent support group when the parent is intimidated or overwhelmed by meetings.</p> <p>KY Spin http://www.kyspin.com/parent_support_groups.cfm</p> <p>Kentucky Education Rights http://www.edrights.com/</p> <p>Kentucky Protection and Advocacy http://www.kypa.net/drupal/?q=taxonomy/term/98</p>	<p>In adult education and Parent Time, teach parents to keep a daily planner and a monthly calendar. Provide parents with materials for making their personal daily planners and family calendars.</p> <p>In Parent Time:</p> <p>Brainstorm with parents the kinds of meeting they attend on behalf of their child. Create a list of the different types of meetings that parents are expected to attend for their special needs child. Put them on a calendar along with phone numbers and contact names.</p> <p>Role-play with parents their role in meetings and model for them how to have their voice be heard. <i>This is especially important for Individualized Education Plan/Individualized Family Service Plan meetings.</i></p> <p>Make an advocacy support telephone list.</p> <p>Practice calling and asking questions.</p> <p>Invite a guest speaker from a group to come and speak to parents during Parent Time.</p>
<p>Parent should know how to advocate for their child.</p>	<p>In adult education, parents can make a personal dictionary of words and acronyms they hear regularly.</p> <p>They can look the words up in the dictionary.</p> <p>In Parent Time, provide parents with the language they need to communicate with school staff, teachers and social services.</p>
<p>Parents should know where to go to get assistance, as their child's needs change.</p>	<p>In Parent Time, provide parents with materials such as binders, sheet protectors, paper, computer access, telephone directories, etc. and guide them in creating their own personal directory of resources for them and their child. They can sort information by age, needs or services.</p>

Diamonds in the Rough



Diamonds are rare.

It is usual that 250 tons of rock, sand and gravel must be processed to yield one carat of polished diamond.

There is another type of diamonds that are also rare. They are often not identified because their brilliance and roughness may mask one another and we only see the rough parts — the inability to write or read effectively, the resulting attitude of discouragement and defeat.

When we do find these diamonds, not only do we help them to reach their potential, we identify the gifts and talents that will benefit our entire society.

— Rich Weinfeld , the Weinfeld Education Group, LLC.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Event	Location	Date
Program Planning in Adult Education: Bringing It All Together	Versailles	April 17th
KAELI Alumni Discussion Forum	Lexington	April 18th
WIN for Instructors (Web conference)	Frankfort	April 18th
BEST Refresher Training	Georgetown	May 2nd
Introduction to TABE and Diagnostic Tools	Mt. Sterling	May 9th
Introduction to TABE and Diagnostic Tools	Versailles	May 19th
Administering the GED Official Practice Test (OPT)	Versailles	June 2nd
Administering the GED Official Practice Test (OPT)	Mt. Sterling	June 9th
Foundations in Reading and Writing Instruction	London	June 26th, and 27th

Register on PDtrack <http://www.kyae.ky.gov/educators/pdtrack.htm>



Purpose:

The purpose of the Kentucky Research Symposium is to bring the nation's foremost researchers and thinkers in literacy to Kentucky to present their research and describe the implications for classroom practice.

For the first time, the symposium will include a focus in adult literacy! Two of the most renowned, nationally recognized researchers in adult literacy will be sharing their latest work.

Date: May 14th and 15th

Location: Spindletop Hall, Lexington

Sponsors: Collaborative Center for Literacy Development and Carol Lee Robertson Endowment for Literacy

For more information and to register, please visit www.kentuckyliteracy.org